

I. Principles for Life and Discernment

These principles are not just for people who have children. I know that when you start to think about parenting classes, you might think, "I don't have any kids," or "I'm past having kids." Let me tell you something: these are principles to live by in every aspect of your life. We talked about some great principles last week.

Remember Proverbs 20:11. The Bible says:

Proverbs 20:11

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

We talked about last week that a parent needs to know their child. This comes from growing up with your child, understanding all of the material that we have talked about, and a parent, like any Christian, being able to get discernment. This means being able to discern and have the ability to see situations not as they appear, but as they really are. As you grow as a Christian, your ability to discern becomes more valuable to God, to this church, and to me as a pastor. Discernment is like discretion, and it comes as you grow with the Lord.

I was talking to someone last week, I forget who it was, I talk to so many people throughout the week, but we were talking about something along these areas and I said, "You know what? That is the job that God has for you and for me: become Christ-like." Most of the time, when we think of Christ-like, we think of it in the sense of what we do. I am not saying that is not important. But we think of, when a man gets up and he starts talking about being Christ-like or in the image of Christ, we naturally think about the things that we do. That is very important and that is also true, but what I am talking about is even more than that. It is really where the heart of the issue is in your life and my life, and that is where we begin to think like Christ. If you begin to think like Christ, you will never have to worry about being in the wrong place.

The longer you are saved and the more you grow, your job and my job is simply one thing: to let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. That is my job as a pastor. My job as a pastor is to help you get there. That is why we talked earlier about the building. I am not worried about a building. I am not interested in a building. If God is not interested in it, I am interested in one thing, and that is you. That is why every member of this church, or you do not even have to be a member of this church, I do not care. I will spend an hour a week or every other week or whatever it takes in your life to help you figure all these things out. That is the key. That is my job. My job is to help you disseminate the Word of God into your heart and into your mind, that as the Bible says, you let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. That is so key.

The older you get, the more you are going to see every situation in life not from your own perspective, but you are going to see it from God's perspective. You are going to realize that the Bible is not a book of "how-tos" and "do-nots" and "what to do," but the Bible rather is a book of showing you, basically in its bottom-line form, God's opinion on everything in life.

II. The Root of Problems: Bad Choices and Responsibility

The reason why we get into the problems we get into in life, whether it be your children, whether it be your marriage, no matter what it may be, the reason why we get into those problems is because we make bad choices. We make bad choices. It is the only reason. Back in my day, Flip Wilson was a comedian, and he was a funny guy, and he had a little line that he always used when he got and did something that was wrong. He used to say that "the devil made me do it." We used to laugh at that growing up, but that is simply not true. Nobody makes you do anything. We choose to do what we do, and we choose what we do based on our value system. Our value system is based on how we view things, how we look at things.

As you get older in the Lord, one of the things that I look for, one of the things that I groom you for in the aspect of leadership, and sometimes when you are a young Christian, you struggle with it, but you have to work through it. It takes time. But the mark of a good leader, the mark of a pastor, the mark of somebody who can handle responsibility in the ministry, is somebody who can separate out their emotions from it. You can put your emotions over here, but you look at any given situation not from your own personal standpoint, but from God's standpoint.

The Bible says in the book of Proverbs that:

Proverbs 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, and without walls.

That is what the Bible does for you. It does not take away your emotions. Your emotions, my emotions, are a God-given thing. If you took the emotions out, you would be "Night of the Zombies." You would not have any feelings on anything. We do not want to do that. But what you have to do is you have to be able to separate out what your own spiritual emotion of your spirit is and override it with the Word of God. Setting what you think over here or what you want to believe over here and going with the true principles of the Word of God and making the decisions, not only in your life, but in your children's life. It basically comes down to being able to see the situation as it truly is, not as it appears.

I have known for years and years and years, since I have been dealing with people, that most people approach life that way. When most people come in to talk to me and they have got situations in their life, situations in their family, whatever it may be, I have found out that very few people really want to deal with the issues. Most people simply want to treat the symptoms. They do not want to solve the problems. They want to feel better. They want to get to the point where they are not depressed anymore. They want to get to the point where they start feeling good again, start being happy again. And then they simply forget God and they move right on.

When I was a child, I went through about, I was not a child, I was probably 18 or 19 years old. I went through about three or four bouts with strep throat. I went to the doctor, my throat was all red, raw, blistered, the whole nine yards. He put me on an antibiotic. I started taking those antibiotics, but I was like most of the guys here today. The medicine did not taste good. In fact, it wiped out your whole taste buds. Everything tasted like the medicine. So what did I do? As soon

as I started feeling better, I stopped taking the medicine, which put me right back into a relapse. Now, I am dumber than the average person. It cost me three office visits and three more prescriptions to finally get it knocked out of my body.

The bottom line is this: I was just like most people today. I just wanted to feel better. I did not want to solve the problem, which was an infection in my body. I wanted to treat the symptoms until I got better. And then I would go right back to what I was doing. Let us face it, that is where most people are at. I am telling you all this because a lot of what we are talking about today and last week is something that you are going to not only use in your family, but many of you are going to grow into the point, as your discernment and your discretion grows, you are going to grow into the place in your life where you are going to make a really good person to sit down with somebody who struggles in life and help them. You are going to make a very good counselor. You are going to make a very good person who can get into any given situation, hear what it is—bad marriage, bad kids, whatever—discern it for what it is, not what it appears to be, and then immediately begin to solve the problem.

As a pastor, I will tell you right up front, I am not interested in treating your symptoms. I am not. I am interested in solving your problem, and I know the Bible has the wherewithal to do that. As parents, we need to know our children. We need to be able to discern and use discretion when it comes to our child.

The second thing we talked about is knowing when not to punish your child, or whip your child, however you want to say it. Knowing when not to is just as important as knowing when to. We talked about that for a while. We talked about understanding the purpose and the design behind chastising your child or whipping your child. I talked about how you have to give your child, we are going to talk about this today because today we are going to get into the nitty-gritty of it. Most messages are three points and a poem. This one for your children is going to be three waxing out. That is what it is going to be. We are going to get down to the hard line of it.

We need to understand the purpose: providing a vision of discipline for your child. Then we talked about knowing the difference as a parent. This goes along with discretion and discernment: being able to discern between willful disobedience and just child immaturity. We talked about those things.

I think the most important thing last week was the three concepts or the principles that I told you that you always want to have in the back of your mind. You want to be listing these now someplace as we go through them so you begin to put them into your daily mode of operation, however that may be. But we talked about three great concepts or three great principles that you always need to remember in disciplining your child.

1. You want to break or mold the will but not the spirit. You do not want to hurt that kid's spirit, but you sometimes have to break his will. I told you last week, it is better when you get them from day one, if you are right on top of things, right out of the womb, to begin to mold that spirit so that you do not have to break it. But in either case, you want to preserve his spirit. We defined those things for you last week: the will and the spirit. So now you should have a better understanding of that.

2. You have a right as a parent to demand that your home be honoring to the Lord. You really do. I think parents sometimes misjudge this whole concept here. I have seen it all my life that I do not know why it is. I do not know why parents give up parenting and turn the whole house over to the kids. I do not understand that. I mean, it is very clear that it is your house, you have the names on the mortgage, you are the one that pays the bills. Why do you allow a child or children, many times it is multiple children, that you just let them run the home? You really have no say. We talked about the great principle that you have a right as a parent to demand that your home be honoring unto the Lord.
3. The longer you wait to instill all of this, the harder it is going to be. Coming up here in a couple of weeks, I am going to show you how to take your family. We are going to talk about the workings of it today, but I am going to actually show you how you take your family and you put together that meeting that you need to have. You need to lay it out where you start from. If you do not have any children yet, you need to learn to do that from day one. If your children are still young enough, you can do that. Wherever they are at, if you want to solve the problem instead of just treating the symptoms, we are going to show you how to do that.

Then we talked about how consistency in discipline is the absolute key. I do not know of any single more important principle in disciplining your child than the concept of consistency. That consistency means both parents. Both parents have to be on the exact same page. That obviously necessitates that you have to communicate. You have to sit down and put out a plan that you do not fly by the seat of your pants, that you understand that when this happens, together as a brick wall, in solidarity, this is going to be our response and how we are going to deal with it.

III. Discipline in Complex Family Structures

I am going to talk to you in just a little bit about the number one thing you have got to shut down in your child's life. It is a very, very, very, very lucrative thing. You really have to watch this. We will talk about it here in just a minute or two. But I want to, with that in mind, I want to get into something that we are going to talk about because in counseling, this is absolutely vitally important. Now, some of you today will say, "Well, this is no real issue to me." But the bottom line is this: if you are going to start dealing with people, you are going to get into this all the time. That is how to deal and do discipline when you have multiple parents because of multiple marriages.

A number of years ago, this has been about 20 years ago, I read a statistic that back then said that half the adult population of the United States had been divorced one time. We were running a lot of people in the United States. Then on top of that, it went on to further say that half of them again had remarried and been divorced again. Divorce was something that basically started into this country because of the breakdown of the lack of preaching and teaching of the Word of God. It is just like the way of all societies: when it loses its Bible, it loses its doctrine; when it loses the doctrine, you lose its teaching, and off it goes.

So you are faced today, if you are going to work with me dealing with people, you are going to be faced with a single issue more than any other issue that I can think of. It is something that is absolutely out there in every situation that you find. It is something that you need to know how

to deal with. I might tell you right up front, very few people are willing to deal with it the way it needs to be done. But that is not your fault nor my fault. It can get very complicated. That is why we as God's people need to understand the principles involved.

Let me just say this to you: in any broken marriage, and some of you as kids, you came through a broken marriage, I am sure it is hard to find a crowd, in a crowd, anybody that did not. But let me just say this: in a broken marriage, it is the kids that always pay the price for the parents' mistakes. I do not know how else to tell you that. A lot of parents have a tough time accepting that. I have said that in places, in smaller group settings, and I could see the lady was already, she liked me up to that point, she was shaking her head. The man was, I mean, it was just, you know how it goes. The truth of the matter is, that is the truth.

In any broken marriage, I have been in this business for almost 40 years. I have seen more marriages destroyed than you have ever thought about being destroyed. I have dealt with that. Roy, I know you do too. You have pastored for a number of years. You know what I am saying is true. Anybody who has done any work in the ministry, and you pastor the church, you know what I am saying is true. Terry, I bet you see it all the time in dealing with drug people, do you not, buddy? All the time. You know what I am saying is true. The real victims will be the children.

What it does is it creates a web of chaos. It becomes a situation where the parents become polarized. She hates him, he hates her. The battleground starts, and whether it is by design, and sometimes it is, or whether it is just by good old, this is the way it is and the events that happen, that child becomes the chess piece in the chess game. He becomes the pawn that begins to be shuffled around through the bad choices that parents have made.

I know that in any given situation, every situation is different. I know that in some marriage relationships, the husband bears more responsibility than the lady, and I have been in some where the lady bore more responsibility than the man. But at the end of the day, it takes two to tango. There is never a situation in life when a marriage goes down that both parties are not responsible in something.

You are going to find yourself in a situation in dealing with people, as a counselor, or maybe at work, or just God puts somebody in your world. Here is how I deal with it when somebody comes to me with just having trouble in their marriage. It depends on where you get them. It is like I said last week, most people wait too long. They wait too long. When they come in to finally see me, it is really bad. But I am not saying this is a last-ditch effort. I have used this in a number of scenarios, but it is truly what you have to do.

What I tell those people is this. Now, this is before they get divorced. You may want to write this down because if you ever deal with somebody, sometimes you have to understand, a lot of things happen. The longer it goes, the more angry they become, the more frustrated they become, the more apart they grow. Most marital problems when you sit down and deal with them, you know what the first thing you are going to get? You are going to get, "Well, she does this," and she is going to say, "And he does this." The thing you do not want to get trapped into as a counselor or as a pastor is jumping on one side or the other. You do not want to do that. I never do that. Now, I may say to the guy, Joe's great point here, that the man is to be the leader. But I know in every

given situation, as Pam helped me so adamantly just lay out and give you the great example, it takes two to tango.

Here is what I do. I say to the husband and wife, "Let us pretend you two are married." And you are saying, "He is a bum." Well, I cannot do that one because I agree with you, he is a bum. Let us find out, "Oh no, let us say that." And you say to me, "Bob, you do not understand what he is like. She is this, she is that. No, no, you are this, you are that." You see the problem? Here is the only way you can deal with it. If you are going to really get into counseling, it helps to get at some point, see John Hill and get a stripe of the shirt and a whistle. He is a referee.

But here is what I do. This situation is really beyond control. Here is what you guys have got to do. You guys have got to call the troops. Justin, what you guys have to do is, quit worrying about her. You need to change about you. Beth, you quit pointing the finger at him, and you work on what you have got to fix in your life. I do not want to hear next week when you come in, "He did this," or "She did that." I want to hear, "I did this," and "I did that." Here is what I did to fix it. Instead of both of you being the problem, both of you become solving the problem.

When you get two people in any marriage to start taking, here is the key word, responsibility for what they did wrong or are doing wrong. When you get the man to say, "Okay, I am short here." The gal to say, "Yeah, you are right. No, I am short here." And you begin as individuals to take responsibility for what you did wrong or are doing wrong in this marriage. I guarantee you, if both people are honest and both people are honest before God, I do not know of a marriage situation that will not fix itself with that kind of mindset. You know why? Because that is biblical.

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Do not tell me how, and I have had husbands tell me this, "Do not tell me how strong you are spiritually and how much you love God when you are not, if she has got problems, if you are not willing to bear her infirmities." Do not tell me how spiritual you are if he has got problems. My point is this: if I get two people in a marriage that are having problems and each of them bear each other's infirmities, that is how you do it.

When the marriage breaks up, I give the same kind of philosophy. I do not ever think divorce is a good idea. Sometimes it is a necessity, but I do not ever think it is God's plan. I think it comes in because of bad choices down the line. But you know what? Hey, in a perfect world, we are not in a perfect world. But I am telling you this, you have got to do whatever you have got to do to keep that child from becoming the pawn between two people.

IV. The Danger of Latitude

I am going to tell you now what the thing that you have got to absolutely guarantee that does not happen in your child's life, or you are going to lose your child. It is simply in one word, it is the word latitude. When you have multiple parents that do not get along, oh yes, you may be justified in feeling what you are feeling. I know all the feelings that get into it. Hey man, you are

not telling me anger, betrayal, hostilities, depression, hatred, revenge, pride, they all get involved when a marriage breaks up. The bottom line is this: you are so angry at her or she is so angry at you. The thing is polarized at both ends, that what happens is the kid has all the latitude in the middle.

Then you have something else you have to balance. That spouse at some point, that girl will marry another guy or the guy will marry another girl. Then you have this situation where you have a situation where the other spouse has to be part of the discipline process, but it is not their child. See how complicated it becomes? I have had guys that have sat in my office and said, "Hey look, I got two boys, I married this great girl, she was married before, these two boys are not my boys. Their father is still around, he is a bozo, but you know what, they are not my kids. How do I discipline them as their father when I am not their real father?" You know what, that is a complicated thing. You just do not find the answer to that at a Chinese fortune cookie from where you got the Chinese food you ate last night. Every situation is obviously different. But those are real issues you have to deal with.

You are going to find a situation where as a father, when that boy needs a whipping, you may not be able to give it to him because the other father who is the real father will turn you in for child abuse. Oh, it gets very complicated. Then you have some who the other spouse knows it is right to go to church, knows it is right to do what is right, but you know what, out of pure spite because they are mad at you, they are going to let that little kid die and grow up and go to hell just so they can prove a point of how angry they are at you. Good job, good job. I guarantee you the judgment seat of Christ, the great white throne judgment, will be filled with little kids screaming and yelling for their mom and dad, "Why? Because of your mistakes am I dying and going to hell?" At the end of the day, that is what you have got. It becomes complicated. It becomes complicated.

But I am telling you, the same way you deal with a marriage before it breaks up is the same way you deal with it for the child's sake after it breaks up. You are going to have to come to some kind of disagreement. Hey, the easiest concept, which is the hardest, is forgiveness. You say to the other spouse, "Hey look, I take my blame on this. I do not blame you for it, I blame me." The other spouse saying, "Well I do not blame you, I blame me." If both of you take the blame and do not blame each other, you know what, you can get along a lot better than if you just go through the rest of your life.

I am going to tell you something. Sometimes you ought to go over there to Hebrews 12:15, and you ought to study very carefully the eight points of bitterness when it finally comes to that point. When your anger, when your frustration, when your feeling of betrayal, and all those flood of emotions come in. When they finally settle in your heart and become a boiling pot of unforgiveness that comes to the point of bitterness, there are eight things that happen to your life, and they will come right down into that child's life. The worst thing you do and provide for that child is latitude. That kid will see the difference between you two so fast your head will swim.

Even in marriages where you are the right parents, and it has got the right dad and the right mom, latitude is the worst thing you can do because what they will do is they will play both ends

against the middle. Latitude, by the way, is the worst thing in your life that gets you and I into the problems we get into. You know what latitude is defined for you and for me? I will define it for you and me as adults first, then we will define it for a child. Latitude by the Bible's definition is the, the Bible says in the book of Ephesians, I think it is, it says:

Ephesians 4:27

Neither give place to the devil.

You know what "place to the devil" means? That means give the devil no latitude in your life. You know what latitude is? Latitude is the distance between what the Bible says you do and what you actually do. You give the devil an inch, he will drive an 18-wheeler through it. That is exactly what happens in your life and my life. The Bible says to do one thing, and we just think we are an exception to the rule. We just think that when God wrote that, He wrote that to everybody else but you and me. I am telling you, it is for everybody. When you and I allow latitude into our life, we are going to have some issues. For your child, that is exactly what you cannot do.

You see, you have control over that. You have to get into the scenario where you realize that even in a good marriage, where the rightful parents are in the same home, your child will learn to play you between each other so fast your head will swim. He will get in there or she will get in there, and that old sin nature, even before they are saved, when they are still an innocent man, that old sin nature will raise its ugly head and they will find out how to create the latitude so they can do what they want to do. I could stay here all morning and give you examples of how that is. But if you are a parent and your kid is four or five years old, you already know how they do it.

Now, take that same scenario and put it into a situation where you have a kid in the middle with two parents who have been divorced, who are angry at each other, who do not get along with each other, and then add two spouses to it, the fact that they are both married on the other end, and you have an absolute catastrophe for that child. It is a situation a child never asked to be put in. Until each parent of each group, and you need to remember this in dealing with this because you are all going to get into it at some point or the other, until those two parents come to the place where they cease fire. They begin to take the blame for their own mistakes and not blame each other, and then recognize and realize that because of the child's sake, they have to work together.

There have been situations that that is really impossible. I have seen situations where the lady married a guy or the guy married a gal, and the person they married wants nothing to do with God or was another great Jehovah Witness. Throw that into the mix. Or a Roman Catholic or a Mormon. Throw that into the mix where now your child is not only faced with two other parents, now he has got another religion he has got to be up against. I guarantee you, if he is a cult, that guy is going to go after that kid much more than you should have when you had him. It gets really complicated. It gets to the cult complicated, and it becomes a disaster.

Hey, you are saved, man. I told a couple one time, I said, "What is the deal? You two get to go to heaven. It is that little kid growing up that is going to get the chance to die and go into hell." I

promise you, you may have missed that, but the devil did not miss it. He will sneak right down in that latitude because of your prideful attitude that you two will not cease fire and get something working, and that kid is going to pay the price because of your pride. Happens 100 million times a year.

You have to get along as best you can. If you have got a situation where you can work it out down the line someplace where both parties can be angry with each other for the kid's sake, and you begin to say, "Hey, look, you need to help me with my child." And the other person says, "Well, I am not your child's father." You will always be the father. But you know what? I understand. You tell me what you want me to do, and I will make sure that I keep keeping that child and supporting what you want to do. Now I am not saying every situation is going to be that way, but I have found some where that is true. Sometimes they are so obstinate that they just will not give an inch. It is, "Brother, you hurt me, and I am going to hurt you." No, you are not going to hurt him. He is off down there in Bermuda, surfing on the beach. He is down there in Mexico. He is out there driving a new Ferrari. You are not hurting him. I will tell you who is getting hurt: "Mommy, mommy, daddy, daddy, why did not you do what is right with me? I mean, hell." That is who gets hurt. That is who gets hurt. That is the reality. That is not treating the symptom. That is fixing the problem.

But when you get into multiple families, it is tough. I have been in situations where I have married people that I gave up trying to figure out who was the mother of the bride. Because they all get offended. I say, "Oh, you are the mother?" "No, I am not the mother. She is the mother." "Oh, I thought she was." "No, I am the stepmother." "Oh, sure, sure." Bang, "Well, that is not my fault. Wear a name tag." "I am not the mother." How am I to know? Do not get mad at me because you do not like her. You know what I will do? "Hey, are you the mother?" "Oh, bang, you look beautiful. Boy, he did better getting you. He did another fat person over there, did he not, huh?" I will fix you. Get mad at me because I had nothing to do with it. How do I know? Get name tags. I am just here to do the wedding.

I know you think that my discernment does stop at a place. I mean, I can sit out and I can discern two people and I can pretty much sort it out or meet somebody and sort it out, but I do not have the ability yet to go into a situation and say, "Hmm, oh yeah, you are the real mother. You are the fake mother. You are the other mother. You are the third mother. You are the fourth mother. And how many were, oh, one of them died in the middle. Well, dig her up and bring her in. I do not care." That is not my fault. No, I know that has nothing to do with you, but I have been carrying that around with me for 25 years, and I just wanted to get it out today. Thank you. Thank you.

Your kid is at stake. Your child is the most important thing you have ever got in your life. You have got to understand that if you have marital problems right now and you and your wife are not getting along, get them fixed. Get them fixed. Let somebody help you who can help you. Get it fixed. You have that child who did not ask to be brought into the world. You got brought into the world because of your lack of irresponsibility of having him. You wanted to have him. How many times have I been in a situation where the marriage is having trouble and the woman says, "Well, if he gives me a baby, then we will be happy." No, no, no, no. If you get him a double-barrel shotgun, you will all be a lot happier. It does not work that way.

Then I see this. Because people who get into bad marriages and get out of bad marriages because they will not stop and say, "Okay, what was wrong with me?" They go right back into a scenario where they get in with somebody else and they have the problems all over again. You know why? Because it is an illusion to think that you did not have any problems in it. If your marriage is on the rocks right now, it is you and I know what happens. Everything gets polarized. Well, I have been in a situation over the years where it gets polarized. It is like one family over here, one family over here, and it is an army man ready to go to war. Just get in the middle, get to what the Word of God says. Just realize, you are a crook, you are a crook, you are both crooks.

Like a guy one time, he put an ad in the paper and he says, "Half the politicians of this town are crooks." Of course, he incurred the wrath of all the politicians, and they demanded that he made a retraction. So the next week he did. Put a retraction and said, "I am sorry, half the politicians of this town are not crooks." That is what you get into. That is what you get into. You are all crooks. So many times I have been in those situations where it actually works. You can actually get them to focus on, and I know there is a period of time where you have to work through all of that. I am not saying that. I had one couple one time years ago that struggled with some things, and they wound up being the best of friends because they recognized that it was their own individual problems. It comes down to taking your own responsibility and then absolving the other one.

You know what? I do not mean this in a bad way. It is true wherever you go. I know some of you have said things about me behind my back that were not true for whatever reason. You know what? Over the years, you know what? I do not care. You know why I do not get all upset about it? You know why I do not get all nervous about it? Because you know what absolves, helps me absolve you of all that? Because I just look back at the times that I have said things about God that were not true. He just loved me and forgave me for it, never brought it up again. You know what? If He can do that for me, I am no better than you are. I can do it with you. It does not make any difference. You know what? You have got to come to the point where you start living by the principle that you shut down the latitude in your own life and then in the lives of your children.

In marriage situations or multiple marriages, the latitude gets huge. It gets humongous. It gets sometimes hard to manage. Sometimes you need a third party to come in and work it out, to get it all, to keep everybody. Everybody needs a good slap in the face every once in a while. Everybody. You are not immune to that. I am not immune to that. But sometimes we just need that bucket of cold water in the face because we get so off track, and we get off because of our own spirit, our own emotions. Those are issues that you are going to deal with as you continue to grow in this church. Those are issues that you need to understand that when you get into certain circumstances that this is what you are up against, and you have to be able to discern that. You have to be able to, you know what? Go in there no matter how close you are to the situation, and it is what the Bible says, not what you feel about it. That is the key. That is the key.

V. The Four Stages of Child Development

In disciplining your child, there are four things that we talked about already, those four transitions. I told you when we laid those out how important they were going to be and are absolutely vital.

- The Discipline Stage (0-4 years old)
- The Relationship Stage (5-10 years old)
- The Fellowship Stage (10-14/15 years old)
- The Responsibility Stage (14/15+ years old)

VI. The Biblical Model for Discipline: Hebrews 12

Now, with that in mind, let us talk about, quickly here, let us talk about the action of punishment. How do you discipline your child? Years ago, I had a lady and her husband came in, and they had a child that was probably, if I remember right, he must have been 16 or 17 years old. This child was a handful. Yet he was one of those, he was a nice kid. I mean, you could not help but like him. Nice guy, nice kid. They are all nice kids. As long as you did not catch him on anything, he was fine, he was respectful, he was affectionate. But life had to be his way. The parents obviously were colliding with him over and over again. He did not want to come to the church anymore and all of this and all that. I liked the kid. I mean, we have been to camp three or four times, but I had seen where this was going. I knew that sooner or later, those parents were going to wind up in my office with an unworkable situation.

I will never forget. I had watched this kid come up through the camps. Anytime this kid got in a jam, anytime this kid got in a jam, I remember dealing with him particularly one time. I said to him, it was a camp. I forget what he did, but it was bad enough that I had to pull him in and sit him down. I started dealing with him on this. His answer to me was, "Well, look, you got so and so out here, and they do it. I mean, why are you yelling at me? They are doing it." Then the kid, and he said, "I will tell you something." Then the kid picked up something out of my life that he saw that he did not like, was convenient at the time. He said, "Well, look at you. You did this, or you said this, or you said that." Basically, he had been taught and trained by his parents to pass off the responsibility of himself, blaming on somebody else. Anytime you tried to deal with him, it was, "Well, what about you?" or "What about this?" or "What about that?" And you could not get anywhere with him. Now that kind of stuff is inbred from mom and dad.

So mom and dad are sitting in my office, and they said to me, "Bob, Dad, yeah, Dad, Bob. Father Bob, let me ask you a question." They said, "You know what? I have tried. What is my problem?" I love situations like this. It is a great teaching experience for them. It is payback for all the things they had to put up with your kid. I never looked at them and I said, "You know what the real problem is?" The real problem is, and I said, "I do not know how to tell you this, but the real problem is, is you really hate your child. You really hate your child." The woman looked at me, and her eyes got as big as saucers. She says, "What do you mean? I do not hate my child. I love my child. I was just," she says, "I do anything for my child." I said, "You know what? That is," I said, "You know what? You have been coming to Bible study. We had Bible study on Monday night back then. I said, you have been coming to Bible study on Monday night for a long time now. I said, you still have not learned that God defines things different than you."

I said, "Let me ask you a question. You wonder what your problem is. Your problem is you hate your child. You do not understand that."

Turn over to Proverbs 13:24.

Proverbs 13:24

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

I read to her, "He that spareth his rod, he that spareth his rod, hateth his son. But he that loveth his children, him, that loveth him, chasteneth him, but time while it is still time." I said, "You know what? What you define as love for your child, God defines as hatred." Because Isaiah 55:11 says:

Isaiah 55:11

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God does not look at things the way you look at it. Your loving your child is in direct violation of what you ought to be doing by the biblical principles in dealing with that child. You think you love him when actually you hate him. Then I took her to the verse that I gave you last week, and she had never seen that one either. How that if your child is rebellious, it is witchcraft, according to the Old Testament. Of course, we saw the passage back there of dealing with authority under Saul. I began to try to help her through that and work her through that. You just, no matter, it comes down to operating by the principles. Here is a woman and a man who loved their kid, but their love of him was sending that kid to hell like a pig on grease ball bearings, man. I mean, he was, their love was absolutely outside the concept of what God wanted to do. They never got into reality of the principles that you can do something good under love the wrong way and send people to hell.

You know, there are preachers out here right now today. You could walk down this street and not go four miles that you will find churches that all the guys getting up there and talking about is just love each other. "Let us love God. God is love. We are loved. Let us love each other." You know what? If the rapture took place, they would just go on with that service. Love is not the answer. Love is not the answer. Love is not the answer in the Christian world and is the answer in your child's world. I am not saying it is not important. I am just saying it is not the answer. The answer is truth. The reality of truth. You can love somebody and because you love them, throw them off the top story of the apartment down in the plaza, because they are suffering. I read in the paper a couple of weeks ago, a guy threw his wife off four stories up the plaza or apartment. He said, "Why is it? Because I loved her." I look at my wife and said, "I love you honey. Come here, I want to show you something off the window."

The real model for disciplining your child is so easy and basic. Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 12. The real model for disciplining your child is the model of God disciplining me and you. The reality of understanding how to deal with your kid when maybe you do not want to deal with it that way, is all summed up for you here.

Hebrews chapter 12:5-11 is one of the greatest passages anywhere in the Bible that shows you and I how God deals with us when you and I get out of line. There are five points in here. Five points that you learn from your relationship with God that you carry these five points into your discipline of your child. This is why it is so easy because if you are saved this morning, I dare to say there is nobody in here that did not get a good whipping from God in the woodshed. Amen? Amen. Oh, I am glad to hear you are all honest in that one regard anyhow.

Hebrews 12:5-11

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

You know what? When you come down through this, you find all the examples, all the examples of how God deals with you and I when He has to give you a whipping. When you come down here, you find five things that God does, and these are the five things, every time you discipline your child and you have to give them a whipping. These are the five things you need to do. You need to write this on the back of your hand someplace and learn this because, and this may take 20 or 30 minutes to do. This is not something you do as you are driving down the road because they just did something wrong. This is something you do because you have got to get to a friend's house for a party, or your softball league is about to start, or your basketball league, or your whatever league you are in, and you run down here and you are in a hurry, so you just take a short route. There is no short route to this. In fact, the short route to this amounts to the problem with consistency.

Look at these five things:

4. Communication
5. Application
6. Explanation
7. Execution
8. Restoration

These are the five things that God, when He deals with us out of Hebrews chapter 12, that we find. Let us talk about them.

- Communication
- Application
- Explanation
- Execution
- Restoration

I will tell you two other things that have to go along with this:

9. You need to take your time.
10. You need to be consistent in doing it. If you are not going to be consistent, then do not even start doing it. It will be more damage than if you do not do it at all.

You are instilling the vision of life with God, the vision of your family ministry, the vision of your family together, the vision of discipline, and even reinforcing it all right here. This is a crucial time. This is something you do not want to hurry through. This is your money in the bank. This is where you are building in their life what they need based on everything else that I have given you. You know what, a child gets past this point where you cannot do that. You have got to have a different meeting with them. Some of you in the next three or four weeks, you need to put together, once we get through this, you need to put together a time with your little children where you sit down and at their level, you explain this section.

VII. Discipline for Older Children: The Prodigal Son

Next week, I am going to talk about a strong-willed child, and we are going to look at it in that sense. I am not done yet, do not get nervous. I have got something else I have got to say here. Well, you start saying that, everybody runs for the bathroom. But we need to understand.

If your child is past that point, and they are 15, 16, 17 years old or 14 or 15, then you know what, you have to have another kind of meeting. In that particular case, where in your young child's life, I would go to Hebrews chapter 12. If you have an older child, I would go to Luke chapter 15, and I would sit down and I would talk about the prodigal son. I would show them that the problem with the prodigal son was the fact that he wasted his substance with riotous living.

I would say, "Look, son, we love you. Honey, we love you. We do anything for you. But you know what, not dealing with your problem." I need to tell you, I realize that I take full responsibility. I take full responsibility. I know that growing up, we always did not do things the right way we should. We probably should have changed some things a long time ago, but we did not. But you know what, we got into the Bible, we found out some truth. That is not our responsibility as parents, but we have come now where we did not do what is right before, we are going to start doing it right now. He needs to understand that. You do not want to come in and

just drop the hammer and say, "Okay, there is a new sheriff in town. This is the way it is going to be." You need to do what I took all the way back to the marriage couple to do it. You need to take responsibility for what is done. You need to make sure that you take that responsibility and start dealing with him.

It is a situation where you say, "You know what, this is God's house. This is God's food. This is God's heat. He provides for us everything because we are His children. It is wrong, and this family belongs to the Lord. It is wrong for us to take the things that God has given to help you run out and live like the world and love like the devil." In fact, you know what, I am going to tell you something. You know what the prodigal son found out? He found out a great lesson in life. This is what you need to learn. What you want to do right now is you want to live like an adult, but you do not want to pick up any responsibility as an adult. You want somebody else to cook your food, have a place for you to live, keep it warm, keep it cool, do your laundry, do all this, provide a place for all this. You know what, the prodigal son learned a great lesson. I suggest that you maybe think about this. If that worldly lifestyle and that devil that you like to run with, talk like, act like, be like, if the devil takes so good care of you, do not take the things of God and mix them with the things of the devil. Just let the devil take care of you. See how good he, see all this? God gave us that. Come back in a year and show me that the devil took care of that good. Tell me that cardboard box under I-435 is better than this nice house. Yeah. Tell me those needle marks up your arm are better than the principles of the Word of God. Tell me the alcohol and all the living lifestyle, the sex, the drugs, the smoking. Tell me all of that when you are 35, 45, 50, go into the doctor and say, "You got lung cancer," or "You got AIDS," or "You got this." Tell me that that is all better than just serving the God that wrote this book, see?

You have got to get into it on their world. I am not saying that you, I have never told a parent to kick their child out. I never have. I always like to leave with it being the child's decision. I would not say to my child, "Get out of this house, you are not ever coming back," but I would say to them, "You know what, these are the principles. You make the choice. I cannot speak for you, but as far as me and my wife, we are going to serve the Lord. You either fit in or fit out." But that is where it has to come to. It is a situation that is, it is, you know, it is different in every scenario. But these are the things you need to learn. Next week, we are going to, we will go hitchhike back on this. We are going to talk about how to deal with a strong-willed child, and we are going to move right on into some other areas. I am starting my first round of new parenting classes. So now that we have talked about discipline, I am sure that will be a lively part of the discussion. I hope so. I want to help you any way I can. If you need to see me one-on-one to figure it out, I will be glad to. We have got enough guys to get everything moved down there the way we need to, and we need some more. There is going to be a change in my asking you.